Who was David Jones?

Michael Owen

An article in Volume 57 of the 2021 Carmarthenshire Antiquary, recounted the charming and romantic old story of the elopement of Sackville Gwynne esquire (1751-1794), and his lover, the local farmer's daughter Kitty (1744-1787). The article[1] delved into Kitty's family ancestry and suggested a very plausible explanation of her roots. It also told of the fury of Sackville's father Roderick (abt. 1695-1777), and the couple's dramatic journey, in the year 1772, with the loss of a satchel full of gold in the Abergwesyn hills. They were escaping to Dublin where the clandestine marriage took place. In one version of the story, the cache was found by a shepherd who handed it to his local squire David Jones. Jones is said to have built his mansion with the lost gold. This article adds to the story, with additional twists, based upon a previously unquoted manuscript, believed to be the earliest written account.[2]

THE ELOPEMENT

An extract copied from Wooding's manuscript,[2] as recorded between his diary entries of 1858, is recounted in the appendix. It is seen to corroborate some of the details reported in the 2021 article, particularly the name Catherine Prytherch and its Welsh form that includes her origin: Catty Clynsaer. It gives further credence to the thought, as stated in the earlier article,[1] that Catty's abode Glansarn had been mistaken for the farm Clynsaer. Additionally, the manuscript asserts that Catty was the maidservant of Sackville's father Roderick. This was very possible, being that Clynsaer was just two miles northeast of the Glanbrân mansion - the seat of the Gwynnes, itself three-and-a-half miles northeast of Llandovery. It was also said in the earlier article that Sackville[3] had received an anonymous letter stating that he had *married his father's pig feeder*, and that she was a *common strumpet*. Whilst offensive, this indeed was a compelling indication of her being a servant of the house. It may also go some way to explaining the affair between Catty and Sackville, as it would otherwise be difficult for a couple of such differing status to meet and form a relationship.

Such stories passed down orally through generations are inevitably subject to distortions and embellishments eventually becoming the folklore of the community. The story of Catty and Sackville is no exception and some of the assertions do not stand up to scrutiny when subject to critical analysis. Three of the most obvious questions to ask are: i) how did Sackville, a young man of twenty-one years of age, come by the £6000 in guineas (which would have weighed 48kg) at a time of domestic discord, and: ii) why were the couple roaming in the Abergwesyn hills, a location north of Glanbrân and quite opposite to the direction they had planned to go to get married. The Abergwesyn hills are dangerous, and the most inhospitable place one can imagine for a couple wanting to flee the country. There were no routes northward to take them to the port at Holyhead; the port which the previous article suggests they might have used. For Holyhead, they would first have had to travel eastwards to Brecon before linking up with the main turnpike system.[4] The most obvious option for their escape was to board a coach at Llandovery which would take them to the port at Pembroke and then sail across the Irish sea to the port of Waterford.[5] Moll's map of Ireland for 1732[6] shows a main highway able take them right through to Dublin: and iii) a point made by Wooding in his manuscript - why is there no record of enquiry or search into the alleged loss?

WHO WAS DAVID JONES?

Other questions arise over the identity and character of the of the alleged recipient of the cache, namely David Jones of Llwynderw. Wooding, whose wife Marianne was the paternal granddaughter of David Jones was obviously keen to challenge the defamation, and his account written in 1858, the year of their marriage, is clearly defensive of David's position. David in fact features as David Jones of Y Fannog (1748-1810) in the Pedigree Chart of an article in Volume 54 of the 2018 Antiquary;[7] Y Fannog[8] was his residence prior to building and finally settling at Llwynderw.

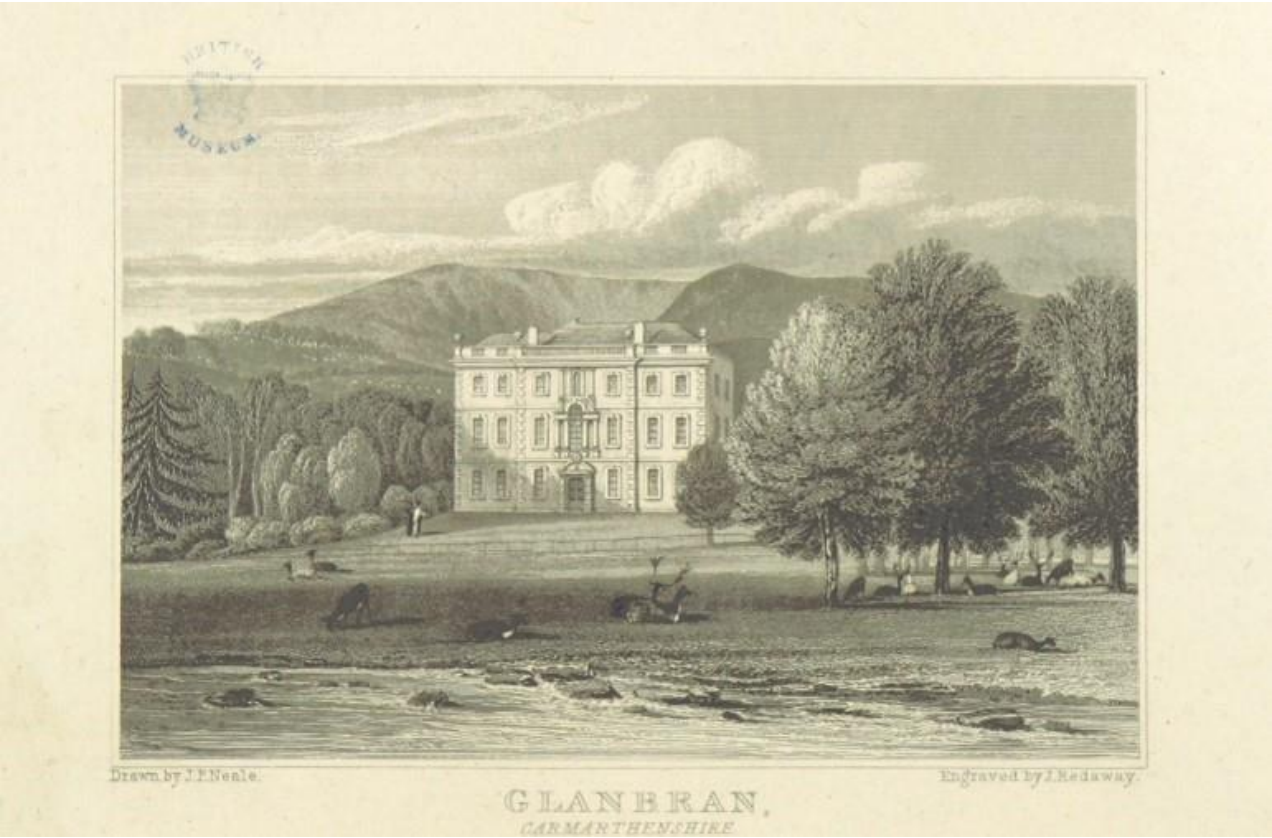

Fig. 1. Glanbrân . Wikimedia Commons, public domain image.

His descent from the Williams family of Llanddewibrefi is described in the Antiquary of 2021,[9] and he benefitted by inheriting some of the stock[10] that earned Williams his cousin, the accolade 'King of the Mountains'. His family were already wealthy, and he proved himself to be an active and astute businessman, patently apparent from Wooding's account. In 1775 he was left £1000 by his bachelor cousin, Rev. Middleton Jones LL.B. (1728-1775),[11] son of his uncle John Jones of Cribarth (d. 1745) who had married the daughter of Middleton Hope of Llandrindod Hall.[12] Unfortunately, only a chevron sable can be distinguished on the coat of arms on Middleton Jones' wall monument which stands in the chancel in his church of St. Mary-on-the-hill, Chester.[13]

David's paternal grandfather David, had in turn married Anne Hope,[2] whose descent was speculated to be of the same Hope family as that of her daughter-in-law Mary. DNA evidence has since shown it to be likely, linking her pedigree to the Hopes of Broughton, Flintshire[14,15] and the Myddeltons of *Chirk-Castle* from whom Middleton Hope is said to have to have descended.[12,14,16] It seems probable that Anne and Middleton Hope were siblings. The Myddelton family, through its distaff line, had earlier formed a parallel family branch to the Myddeltons of Chirk, namely, that of the Middletons of Middleton Hall Llanarthne, now the site of the *National Botanical Gardens of Wales*.[17] The obituary entry of 1846 for David's wife Letitia (Lettice) in *The Gentleman's Magazine*,[18] describes her as: relict of D. Jones esq. Llwynderw, a magistrate and Deputy Lieut. for Brecon.

David was obviously a man of status in the local community. He was also closely acquainted with the family of Sackville Gwynne. Wooding's record shows that he purchased land from the Gwynnes. His son, also named David Jones (1798-1839) was in 1821, to marry Jane Lawrence of Llanelwedd Hall – *another captivating story of romance and elopement; and eventually tragedy*.[19]

She was sister-in-law to Marmaduke Howell Thomas Gwynne (High Sheriff of Radnorshire in 1803) - Sackville's first cousin twice removed. David's uncle, John Jones of Cribarth (d. 1745),[11] a lawyer, was in 1718 Under-Sheriff of Radnorshire. Marmaduke Gwynne of Garth was High Sheriff and the uncle of Sackville. Cribarth was the seat of the Jones', and Garth House the seat of the Garth Gwynnes. The properties were separated by just one-and-a-half miles. In 1741, John Jones and Marmaduke, also a magistrate and lawyer, travelled to Knighton for the trial of Howell Harris. Harris was one of the founding members of Calvinistic Methodism in Wales. One of his meetings had become agitated, and a charge of riotous assault was levelled against him. Fortunately, with the assistance of Marmaduke, and the protection of Jones, he evaded injury and goal, getting off lightly with a fine of eleven shillings and sixpence.[20,21]

MOTIVE

What then could have been the motive for the defamatory allegations against David? It is well known that relations between a squire and his tenant were not always cordial, and this may have been the case with David Jones. In a letter of 1788 by Capt. John Lloyd of Dinas Llanwrtyd,[22] about David Watkins of Maesgwilod Mill, he writes: 'I believe this fellow be very worthless idle and poor … the Care of the Woods are my greatest concern pray give the Tenants strict charge on that head, I insist that they do not burn any Wood … Mr David Jones of Vanog has a long story to tell you on that subject – if you can pray punish the offenders'. John Lloyd, *The Adventurous Welshman*,[23] was David's cousin, and in David's will[24] dated 1810, John Lloyd was a nominated trustee and guardian for his children alongside David Thomas of Welfield.

Fig 2. From Abergwesyn hills overlooking Llyn Brianne. Author's collection.

EPILOGUE

Although Kitty died young at the age of forty-three, the love match of fifteen years appears to have been a great success, producing offspring of three sons and two daughters. After the death of his father, Sackville and Kitty returned to Glanbrân, he as a patron of Welsh harpists, and was himself one of finest triple harp players of his day.[3] Patronage of the harp at Glanbrân continued well into the 19th century.

APPENDIX

David first married in / or abt. the year 1777 Mary Price of Rhosybedw Llanycrwys: who died at Vanog, Thursday 4th October 1787 aged 37, *S.P.*: and secondly at Llanddewi Abergwesyn, Wedy 5th Novr 1788 Lettice Williams of Rhydnes Boughrood Radnorshire: he died – worth about £25,000 (twenty five thousand pounds) – at Llwynderw, of Gout in the stomach, after 5 days illness on Monday morning 26th February: and was buried 3rd March 1810 aged 62 years having had fourteen children, namely 7 sons and 7 daurs as follows:-

I Marian who died 8th April 1791 aged 16 mos: II Peter died 1792 aged 10 mos: III Peter born 22nd June 1792: IV Marian bapd 23rd April 1794: V Lettice born 3rd bapd 16th May 1795: VI David born 1st and bapd Easter Monday 9th April 1798: VII Elizabeth bapd 26th Octr 1799: VIII John bapd 28th March Sept 1801: IX Fortune died young: X Rees died young: XI Rees bapd 24th July 1805: XII Sarah bapd 23rd January 1807: XIII William Williams bapd 14th Augst 1808: XIV Caroline bapd 29th April 1810.

David when with his parents at Dugoedydd had somehow or other acquired the stock of Moelprysge which were looked after and attended to by servants: - a maid of his having drowned there while attempting to cross the Towy when flooded: he soon afterwards bought out the interest of John Evans – who died at Rhydhalog in Sept 1828 aged 88 - in Vanog stock: upon which with Tynygraig Abergwrach and Nanycraf he obtained a lease for 3 lives at £25 per annum: as well as upon Moelprysge for the same term and price which ended about the year AD 1822. He built[25] Vanog about 1778: roofing it with tile from Chwareldu near Cernygilfach. Upon being left Llwynderw with the adjoining premises – in 1779 he appears to have immediately premeditated building for himself a mansion thereon as his tobacco box engraved and presented by Robert Roberts of Llwynybeudy far of RR. Bap: Mir Swyddffynnon who died 26th Feb 1870 age 75 and was bd in Ystradmeurig church now in the possession of his son Peter bears the inscription "David Jones Esq. Llwynderw 1780": but as he had no issue by his first wife that project was delayed until 1794 when his issue by the second marriage appeared to live and increase: and about which time he also purchased for abt £900 – from the Trustee or representative of the Prices of Talgarth (a younger branch of the Prices of Rhosforlo in Llanfechan: descended from Richd Prees son of Rees Richard of Diggiff Gent. who Decr 1685 married Joan one of the daughters of Thomas Prees of the parish of Llanlleonfel with a dowry of £100) Diggiff in Llanddewi Abergwesyn 536 acres – the sheep of which he exchanged with the tenant of Thomas Jones for those of Nantnoyadd and Gnaich – together with Crug and Penwern in Llanfihangel Abergwesyn:- when he laid out building Llwynderw abt £5000: hauling the greater part of stone in front from Llanelwedd and the tile from near Trecastle and removed therefrom Vanog in May 1796: and soon afterwards employed Mr Morgan of Talrhyn to buy for him from someone in Carmarthenshire Penrhuddfa – 660 acres: About this time he also purchased of Edwd Thomas Llwynmadoc Gribin 216 acres: and of the Gwynnes, Gwaith y gwrbach about one acre running up between Alltybryn and Tynllan from Dolau pool – all in Llanddewi Abergwesyn: Maescwm, Pwllgwyn, Penlangrick and Gwernllynog in Llandewi'r Cwm he is supposed to have bought a few years prior. He purchased the sheep of Carregfran in 1784 from the tenant Evan Jones:- who then removed to Nantygraig and in 1797 purchased the said premises of John Williams Esq. of Castle Hill Llanilar for 200 guineas and died there in September 1837 aged 90: and those of Brongillent abt 1798 from the tenant Rees John Shelby: and thereby added those two places to the others which he already held under the Powell's of Nanteos (- to whom they descended through marriage from the last Richd Stedman who died with his sister at Llanddewi Hall Radnorshire from where he was brought on an "Elor Feirch" to the church of Strata Florida to be interred with his ancestors) and at the same time added another proof to the correctness of expression made use of years prior by envious persons "Gwae i Llanddewi Abergwesyn ddyfod Deio Dygoedydd dros ddwr Tywi erioed."

Though a magistrate for the county he was but an indifferent scholar: but wrote a bold legible hand: and was one of the subscribers to Theophilus Jones History of the County of Brecknock published 1804-8 which contains the following notice of him (Vol 2[26] page 231) :- "Notwithstanding the distances from markets the badness of the roads and the inclemency of the climate during the

greatest part of the year, a gentleman of the name of Jones possessed of considerable property, real and personal and a magistrate in the commission of the peace for the County has built a handsome house called Llwynderw, or the Oak Grove, in this parish where he resides and pays his attention principally to rearing sheep, of which he is supposed to be the greatest proprietor in South Wales if not in the Principality: he is said to have upwards of ten thousand, worth on average ten or twelve shillings each: the Leicester farmer will smile at the individual value of each of these diminutive animals, but let him introduce his rank, overgrown stock, to these mountains, and see what his profit will amount to at the end of the year?"

He wore a drab Kerseymore breeches and leggings: and – when young – was considered slender and active: he was rather dark and complexioned: about 5 feet 8 inches in height had a large nose – not unlike the descendants of his aunt Susannah of Llwyncus: and a head measuring about 7¼: both he and his second wife were Methodists:- who often held meetings at Llwynderw: and one Sunday evening when returning from Bont near Cwmirfon heard melodius singing in the air:- which by some was interpreted as implying near at hand a great revival in religion. He was most exact, strict and fair in all dealings: and generally beloved and revered by his neighbours. Perhaps it would not be out of place also to mention here that the hire he generally paid to his labourers with their food was 4^{d} per day: and that they fared and paid their way then as well as they have done since.

The Abergwesyns have a story accounting for his fast accumulations: but as there are different versions thereof, I consider it was originally fabricated to answer the said purpose only: One and the most general runs thus:- that Sackville eldest son of Roderic Gwynne of Glanbrân, when eloping with his fathers maidservant "Catty Clynsaer" (Catherine Prytherch who died 28th Decr 1787, aged 43 and was buried in Glandulas church) lost on Cefncoch Llwynderw, in crossing a boggy place one of the locked up leather wallets, filled with guineas, which he was carrying away along: which was found by David Davies (who continued shepherding on Llwynderw till his decease at Lletrygraig in the spring of 1840, aged near 90: and lies buried ab^{t} 2 yards north of the said David Jones in Llanddewi Abergwesyn churchyard) Vanog shepherd: and with little difficulty and exertion brought down to the house of his employer, whereupon he passed the remark that he had found sufficient cues (iron shoes for oxen) for their lives: the other version being that the wallet had no lock: was lost on Gniach meadow from where the shepherd fetched his master to see what he supposed might be gold, when the latter remarked they were only Portobelloes,[27] and of no great value, but perhaps he might be able to do something of them. I am of the opinion that the said first and second versions are self contradictory: that it will be found upon reference to the inscription of Tyrabbot church that Roderic Gwynne had died in 1777 prior to David Jones removal to Vanog: and that the tablet to the memory of his grandson Sackville – Catty's son at Llanfairarybryn who died of apoplexy 7th Sep^{t} 1836 aged 58 leaving issue 15 children, shows his birth to have taken place prior to[28] his grandfathers decease. It also appears strange that if such a treasure was actually lost, how no enquiry or search was ever made after it.

NOTES

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8. Sometimes written without 'Y'; with one or two 'n'; and 'V' in place of 'F'.
9. Owen, M: Mary Lloyd of Mandinam – an update, *The Carmarthenshire Antiquary*, pp. 135-142, Vol. 57, 2021.
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24. Will of David Jones. NLW, SD/1810/270. http://hdl.handle.net/10107/805651
25. It was a re-build. David's grandfather Rees Williams had once held the property.
26. It is Vol. I.
27. Portobelloes are medallions, but not accepted for currency.
28. The dates suggest he meant to write: 'subsequent to'. The purpose of the statement is unknown

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